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24 January 1959

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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24 January 1959

DAILY BRIEF

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

USSR-UAR:

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Soviet leaders have complained [redacted] that Western press exploitation of Nasir's anti-Communist moves has elevated the matter from an "internal" to an "international" issue. The Kremlin is said to feel that while the USSR still respects the UAR's right of independent action, the fact that the attacks appeared in the UAR-controlled press and radio has given the anti-Communist charges an official character, and thus will ultimately create a critical situation for the Soviet position in other Afro-Asian countries. [redacted] Soviet Ambassador Kissilev has hinted that Soviet assistance for the Aswan High Dam project might be affected by the UAR anti-Communist campaign.

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*Laos: [Premier Phoui's efforts to pack his new cabinet with ineffectual conservative politicians and members of his family are splitting the ranks of the power group in Laos. The army and young reformist elements refuse to join such a cabinet, and if Phoui miscalculates his strength and remains adamant, there is a prospect that the army would seize power and call on the Crown Prince to appoint a government.] 25X1

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Thailand: [Friction is apparently growing between Marshal Sarit and his two principal deputies, Generals Thanom and Prapat. This raises the possibility of an estrangement which might upset the precarious stability of the ruling military group.] 25X1

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III. THE WEST

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France-Algeria: [Contacts between the French Government and the Algerian rebels continue, and Egyptian President Nasir has indicated that he personally would be willing to help mediate the dispute. Some sort of understanding with the rebels is increasingly urgent for De Gaulle. Nasir is unlikely to risk his prestige in any mediation effort unless he has some assurance that it will be successful.] 25X1
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DAILY BRIEF

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

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Soviet Leaders Criticize Nasir's Anti-Communist Moves

[Soviet leaders have complained [redacted]

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[redacted] that Western press exploitation of the UAR campaign against local Communists has raised the matter from an "internal affair" to an "international" issue, [redacted]

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[redacted] The Kremlin is also said to be concerned over the extreme character of some attacks by the Cairo press and radio, since UAR governmental control of these organs gives such statements an "official status." While the USSR still respects Cairo's right of independent action in moving against local Communists, the Kremlin reportedly feels that UAR charges of Communist opposition to Arab independence and unity can damage the USSR's relations with other Afro-Asian countries.]

[Soviet Ambassador Kissilev in Cairo has been angered by the way the UAR's crackdown on Communists has been treated in the press of Jordan, Lebanon, and Kuwait as well as the UAR, [redacted]]

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[Despite indications that Moscow is increasingly displeased with recent signs of improvement in Cairo's relations with the West and with Nasir's anti-Communist moves, the UAR President has stated that the USSR has not broached the latter problem "officially." Soviet leaders still apparently hope to avoid any open clash with Cairo on the issue. The Soviet press and radio continue to avoid independent criticism, although on 19 January Moscow abandoned its hitherto brief factual reporting by repeating to Arab listeners an attack attributed by the Paris Communist newspaper L'Humanité to the Moroccan Communist party calling Nasir's crackdown on Communists a "blow to democracy" which will hinder the Arab struggle against "imperialism." At least one East European journal--the Polish Government paper Zycie Warszawy--has recently indulged in direct but mild criticism of Nasir, while the Indonesian and Algerian Communist parties have attacked his anti-Communist moves in strong language.] [redacted]

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Conflict Develops Within Laotian Power Group

[Prime Minister Phoui Sananikone's efforts to include his relatives and a heavy proportion of discredited politicians in the new cabinet are creating friction with the army and young reformers of the Committee for the Defense of National Interests (CDNI), who backed his successful demand that the assembly grant him full powers. The army officers and reformists now refuse to participate in his proposed cabinet since it would carry over the image of previous ineffectual governments and diminish the prospect for radical reforms opened by Phoui's assembly victory.]

[The army and CDNI are aware that a serious crisis could develop, and they have made it clear that they are ready to negotiate with Phoui on an acceptable slate. Some jockeying for position is almost inevitable, especially in a situation where long-entrenched politicians are being displaced by reform groups only recently emerged on the political scene. However, if Phoui miscalculates his strength and remains adamant, there is a real prospect that the army would seize power, and call upon the Crown Prince to appoint a government.]

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Friction Reported Among Thai Military Leaders

[Friction between Thai Premier Marshal Sarit and his principal deputies, Generals Thanom and Prapat, appears to be growing. There is some danger that an estrangement may ensue which might upset the precarious stability within the ruling military group. [redacted] dissatisfaction is increasing throughout Sarit's Revolutionary party-- which includes both military and civilian elements--over his performance as Thailand's dictator. Sarit is said again to be ignoring the party's advice on matters of state, and his continued delay in forming an interim government is meeting with criticism.]

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[Thanom and Prapat, who seem to have submerged their past differences, would prefer to avoid trouble since they expect that Sarit's declining health will soon force him to give up power. [redacted]]

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[redacted] He has apparently been piqued because they questioned certain of his official decisions. Some weeks ago, on the basis of rumors, he actually detained for a short time Air Marshal Dawee, a popular figure in the military group.] [redacted]

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Nasir Willing to Mediate Between France and Algerian Rebels

Egyptian President Nasir now has indicated he believes he can bring about peace between France and the Algerian rebels, and has stated that he personally would be willing to help mediate.

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[redacted] Nasir may have been influenced by his recent talks with Italian Premier Fanfani who, despite public denials that he was acting as an intermediary, nevertheless carried Nasir's views on Algeria to De Gaulle on 14 January. Nasir reportedly said that "if he did anything" he would require French assurances of an intention to free Algeria after a definite number of years.

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According to Fanfani, De Gaulle indicated great interest in Nasir's observations but, although more flexible than several months ago, appeared "troubled and uncertain" about the future of Algeria. The French President is probably weighing the domestic repercussions of mediation by Nasir--particularly the reactions of some army elements and die-hard rightists in France as well as Algeria. Nevertheless, some sort of early settlement of the Algerian question is made increasingly urgent by French political, economic, and military considerations.

De Gaulle may also hope that Moslems more representative of the masses than the deputies elected to the National Assembly last November will emerge from the March municipal elections in Algeria. The American consul general in Algiers notes the necessity of a cease-fire for the municipal elections, pointing out that it was difficult to find 100 Moslem candidates for 46 assembly seats in November and that there are some 15,000 positions to be filled in March.

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